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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, June 29, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MAYONNAISE AND THE LAW." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Friends, has it ever occurred to you that the mayonnaise dressing you buy for your salads has any connection with the Long Arm of the Law? A good connection, too, for it keeps us from buying mayonnaise dressing that is not up to standard.

Even Webster's dictionary recognizes the fact that the law protects us from buying mayonnaise that does not contain the proper amounts of ingredients. The dictionary defines mayonnaise as: "A thick sauce compounded of raw yolk or yolk and white of egg beaten up with edible vegetable oil and seasoned with vinegar or lemon juice, pepper, salt, and so forth. In the United States," -- still quoting the dictionary -- "the commercial product must contain not less than 50 per cent of edible vegetable oil. . ."

We are discussing the "commercial product" today. (Incidentally, if it weren't for our correspondent with the federal Food and Drug Administration, I'd never have thought to look in the dictionary for mayonnaise dressing. I usually find my recipes in a cookbook.)

Quoting directly from today's report: "Last week," says our correspondent, "I told you how the Pure Food Law protects consumers against unwittingly buying adulterated and misbranded jellies, jams, and preserves at the price of the genuine article, and I gave you the Government's advisory standards for these products. Today I'll give you the standard for commercial mayonnaise: 'Mayonnaise, mayonnaise dressing, mayonnaise salad dressing, is the semi-solid emulsion of edible vegetable oil, egg yolk, or whole egg, a vinegar, and/or lemon juice, with one or more of the following: Salt, other seasoning commonly used in its preparation, sugar and/or dextrose. The finished product contains not less than 50 per cent of edible vegetable oil.' That's the official administrative definition, with which all commercial products labeled 'Mayonnaise' are required to conform. In the days when no standard existed, manufacturers used practically any proportions of ingredients they pleased. If it struck their fancy to put up a product largely composed of starch and water -- it was difficult to prevent their selling such a compound."

So much for mayonnaise. Now let's see whether we have standards for other salad dressings, such as French and Russian. . . . Well, according to our correspondent, we have no standards for these types of salad dressings, but manufacturers are advised to follow the recipes used by cookery experts, which seems fair enough.

Next, our official reporter discusses mineral oil -- which is often used in products resembling salad dressings. Mineral oil has no food value at all. According to the Pure Food Law, the use of mineral oil in a food product is an "adulteration." Quoting directly:

"These products made with mineral oil as a base may have some usefulness for those who want to limit the amount of food consumed. However, mineral oil products should never be sold as foods; mineral oil is inherently a drug, and preparations containing it should be clearly labeled to show what they are and to differentiate them from food products. In spite of extravagant claims, these preparations have no curative value as a treatment for disorders caused by over-weight. Products containing too much mineral oil have a laxative effect which may not always be desirable." So much for mineral oil.

And now, olive oil. Quoting directly: "All over the world, olive oil is a favorite for salad dressings, and as a cooking oil. People who come to the United States from the olive-growing countries are particularly partial to olive oil, and unscrupulous manufacturers sometimes take advantage of the situation by putting on the market a cheaper product that resembles olive oil -- often put up in cans bearing pictures of olive groves in sunny Italy, or Italian flags, names, and gold medals.

"To adulterate the genuine product, these unethical manufacturers have used oils made from cottonseed, sesame, corn, peanut, or rape seed. These are all wholesome and valuable food oils. They do not, however, command the price brought by olive oil. To sell them as olive oil is a plain cheat. Competition among the racketeers finally led them to use less and less of pure olive oil in mixtures with other oils, until they finally produced an oil which was not even distantly related to the olive.

"Not long ago, the Government uncovered a new racket -- the substitution of cheap tea seed oil for the more expensive olive oil. Tea seed oil is pressed from the nut, or seed, produced by the tea plant. The oil, imported from the Orient, is used principally in the paint and textile industries. Naturally, the Government would have no ground for action against refined tea seed oil sold as such. But it should be sold for what it is. Use of the tea seed oil as an adulterant in olive oil is clearly a violation of the Food and Drugs Act. Since tea seed oil is light in color, and without flavor, some of the racketeers were able to mix as much as 70 percent of it with 30 percent of highly flavored olive oil -- and sell the mixture as genuine olive oil. In some of these products, artificial green color and artificial flavor were found. In every possible instance the Government prosecuted the offenders. Many seizures have been made.

"By the way," continues our correspondent, "referring again to the standards for commercial mayonnaise, you may recall that the definition does not state that olive oil must be used. There is no requirement that the kind of food oil used be named on the label. If the label does state the kind of oil present the statement must be true to fact.

"And now," concludes our correspondent, "after saying so much about olive oil, I'd like to go to Italy -- or Spain.

"'Fair land of chivalry; the old domain;
Land of the vine and olive; lovely Spain.'"

. . . . . Well, wouldn't we all? But we have work to do at home.

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